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A Guide to the Use of Airborne Landings

by Lieutenant-Colonel M. Belov

The growing role of airborne landings in modern battle and in an operation and the increase in the relative proportion of motorized rifle troops in their composition are mentioned in a number of published works by eminent specialists in this field*.

It is therefore quite obviously necessary that all units and large units of ground troops should be trained in advance for use in airborne landings.

However, existing theoretical studies and official documents, as in the past, entrust the problems on the use of landings mainly to airborne troops. They do not bring out sufficiently the specific features of landings of motorized rifle troops and, consequently, do not promote their advance training.

As an example, let us take the basic document governing the use of airborne landings, The Manual on the Use of Airborne Troops. The title alone testifies to the fact that it is entirely directed to airborne troops. Although the Manual does state that motorized rifle units (sub-units) are usually used in the composition of tactical airborne landings, this is clearly not enough.

Similarly, the draft of the Manual on the Field Service of Staffs and the Manual on the Troop Rear Services of the Soviet Army present the special features of the headquarters, the organization, and the work of the rear services of airborne troops and not, as one should expect, of airborne landings.

We consider that under modern conditions the content of such documents does not answer existing requirements. The need has become urgent to work

* N. N. Lisov and S. Ye. Rozhdestvenskiy: Airborne Landings, Military Publishing House, 1959, P. 296; Major-General A. Rudinov: The Use of Airborne Troops under Modern Conditions, Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought", No. 6 (50), 1958, P. 47.

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out an official guide which will combine the problems of the use of airborne and motorized rifle troops into an overall theory of airborne landings.

In connection with this, it should also be noted that in the outline of the new Field Service Regulations and in the draft of the Manual on the Field Service of Staffs there is likewise no consideration given to the changes which have taken place in the practice of airborne landings. In both these documents consideration is once again given to questions of the use of airborne troops rather than to airborne landings.

It is true that in some sections of the Field Service Regulations (pp. 15, 19, and 40) there is a discussion of the goal of the use of airborne landings, the bases of their offensive operations, and their materiel and medical support. In the remaining cases, however, consideration is given only to the landings and operations of an airborne division (parachute regiment).

The special features in operations where troops are used in airborne landings most frequently become apparent in the period of training and after the drop, up to the moment of contact with the enemy. And, in our opinion, this should be quite fully reflected in a document which is defining the possibility of the use of airborne landings.

Since the problems to be taken up will deal with the use of any ground troops under highly unusual conditions, requiring both special training and special support, it would be better to call this document a guide and not a manual.

In order to work up this document, it is necessary to call on specialists from the airborne troops and on officers with experience in the landing of motorized rifle troops. The main role in investigating the problems of the use of airborne landings in battle and in an operation must be taken by the Directorate of Airborne Troops, which has well-trained cadres for this purpose and which is capable of grasping the whole system of measures linked with the use of any units or large units of ground troops in airborne landings.

Obviously, a single working out of the theory of airborne landings and a periodic assignment of specialists to render aid in the use of a landing are clearly inadequate.

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In order to achieve widespread experience and to ensure the most expedient and skilful use of airborne landings, it is necessary, in our opinion, to have groups of officers, who are well-trained in landings, on the staffs of armies and fronts, and, also, to provide for a corresponding training assignment of officers of motorized rifle troops to airborne large units and units. After a single Guide to the Use of Airborne Landings has been worked out and after the combined-arms large units and formations of ground troops have been supplied with specialists, we may count on the successful training of motorized rifle troops for airborne landings.

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